

2026 Boots on the Ground

Request for Proposal Workshop

Housekeeping



Workshop is being recorded

- Posted on GCF website as a reference

Mute your device

Submit questions in the chat

Q&A session at the end

- Unanswered questions will be addressed via email

Agenda

GCF Introductions

Request for Proposal Purpose and Overview

Submission Instructions

Q&A



Meet the team



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Strengthening community-rooted organizations

Now in its fourth cycle, Greater Cincinnati Foundation and the City of Cincinnati continue their shared commitment to building the capacity of small, community-rooted organizations driving meaningful change across the city.



Funding focus



Homelessness prevention and access to affordable housing



Access to affordable, healthy foods – reduction of food deserts



Access to healthcare and public health



Workforce development



Youth development



Youth gun violence reduction and prevention



Mental and behavioral health, including substance use services



Boots on the Ground

2023, 2024, 2025 by the numbers

The Odds:

31 Grants
\$610K Awarded

2023

136 Submissions
\$3,179,229 Requested

41 Grants
\$835K Awarded

2024

105 Submissions
\$2,477,025 Requested

38 Grants
\$836K Awarded

2025

140 Submissions
\$3,236,255 Requested

Opportunities Amplified over the past 3 years:

1,000 Hours

Dedicated to Capacity Building

52 Neighborhoods

Reached within the City of Cincinnati

5 Partners

Pooling resources to drive greater impact



Community rooted organizations with demonstrated impact

2025 Boots on the Ground grant recipients are not eligible to apply.

Eligibility requirements:

- Recognized as tax-exempt by the IRS, typically holding 501(c)(3) status
 - Organizations without 501(c)(3) status may use a Fiscal Sponsor
- Annual operating budget under \$1M
- Proposals must directly benefit residents within the City of Cincinnati
- More than six months of operations

Preference given to:

- Elevate community voice and engage a broad range of changemakers
- Clear and measurable outcomes
 - Use of S.M.A.R.T. Goals
- Alignment with broader efforts
- Demonstrated past experience
- Asset-based approach

2026 Boots on the Ground Funding at-a-glance

\$750K



Available funding

\$25K



**Maximum grant
award**

30 Grants



**Minimum number
of grants awarded**

This support is made possible through a partnership with the City of Cincinnati, Greater Cincinnati Foundation, and the generous contributions of additional funders.



Use of funds

—

Collaboration among organizations is strongly encouraged

Eligible uses of funding

- Support, strengthen or expand existing programs
- Launch new initiatives
- Build organizational capacity

Not eligible for funding

- Campaigns
- Capital campaigns
- Special events



Enhance your organization's capacity throughout the process

In addition to the RFP Workshop, **3 free capacity building workshops** will offer practical, actionable guidance on governance, fundraising, and program design.

Register at no cost and join us in person at GCF.



Register now for all three workshops

gcfndn.org/rfp → select Boots on the Ground

Governance & Compliance

Wednesday, February 18 | 2-3 pm

- Learn core governance best practices
- Understand key risk areas unique to 501(c)(3) organizations
- Gain practical strategies to avoid common costly pitfalls



Fundraising & Development

Wednesday, February 25 | 2-3 pm

- Gain an understanding of fundraising fundamentals
- Identify right-sized strategies for smaller nonprofits
- Receive actionable tools to strengthen fundraising capacity



Program Design, Delivery & Evaluation

Tuesday, March 3 | 12 – 1:30 pm
Lunch provided

- Receive practical tools to strengthen program design & delivery
- Use realistic approaches to measure impact with limited resources
- Demonstrate greater confidence responding to funder expectations



Boots on the Ground Timeline

Date	Key Step
Tuesday, February 10, 2026 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. Zoom	Request for Proposal/RFP Workshop* <i>Virtual: Register here</i>
Wednesday, February 18, 2026 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. GCF – River Room 720 E. Pete Rose Way, Suite 120, Cincinnati	Nonprofit Management Workshop: “Governance and Compliance” <i>Optional: Register here</i>
Wednesday, February 25, 2026 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. GCF – River Room	Nonprofit Management Workshop: “Fundraising and Development” <i>Optional: Register here</i>
Tuesday, March 3, 2026 12:00 – 1:30 p.m. GCF – River Room Lunch provided	Nonprofit Management Workshop: “Program Design, Delivery, and Evaluation” <i>Optional: Register here</i>
Friday, March 13, 2026 5:00 p.m. EST	Proposal Deadline
May 2026	Decisions Communicated
May 2026	Funding Received

Positioning your application for success – it's what you say **and** how you say it...

Maximize the opportunity to share your program or project with reviewers by being clear and concise; and by crafting a narrative that is easy to follow and understandable to someone who may not be close to the work.



How does your organization involve the communities you serve?

Does your organization involve community members in the organization's decision-making or programming?

Do you have community members with lived experience on your staff or board?

Does your organization collect feedback from those that are served?



S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Specific *What are you trying to achieve?*

- Inspirational
- Both shorter –and long-term goals

Measurable *What does success look like?*

- Concrete & measurable (include a target #/rate)
- Stronger if included outcomes (not just outputs)
- Align with past results

Achievable *Is the goal obtainable?*

- Set realistic goals that are challenging but achievable

Relevant *How does this goal align with your program?*

- Ensure the goal serves a relevant purpose

Time Bound *What is the timeframe of these short or long-term goals?*

- Outline the steps with a projected timeline/schedule



Recognize communities for their **capabilities** and **cultural strengths**, shifting the narrative from problems to **potential**.

Asset-based framing

Detectable through tone...

Focus on strengths, not deficits – center community assets, leadership, and solutions already in motion.



Navigating the GCF application system - Foundant

All Boots on the Ground applications and supporting documents must be submitted online through Foundant, GCF's grants management system, at gcfdn.org/Foundant. Applicants should create an account or log in to an existing account. Each organization must maintain one account.



Submitting the application



How to Apply for a Grant Using Foundant

This guide provides a straightforward, step-by-step process for applying for grants through Foundant, making it accessible for both new and experienced grant seekers. By following these instructions, users can efficiently navigate the application portal, ensuring they don't miss any critical steps. It also offers support for those unsure about their organization's account status, enhancing the overall user experience.

Viewing this guide can significantly streamline the grant application process, increasing the chances of securing funding.

10 Steps | 49 seconds

Grantinterface

Gcfdn



Step 0 of 10



Required documents

Upload the following **three (3) documents** for your application to be considered complete:

- 1. Project Budget**

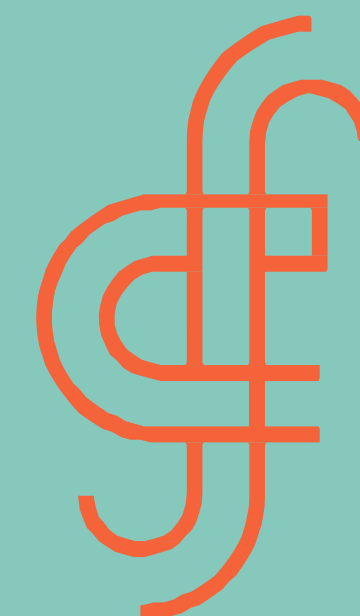
- Financial representation of use of funds

- 2. Board List**

- In partnership with the staff, who is steering the direction of the organization

- 3. Income Statement & Balance Sheet (past two years) – or**

- Most recent 990, if applicable
- Organizational Budget
 - If less than two years of operations



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CINCINNATI
FOUNDATION**

Financials FAQ

Don't have an Income Statement or Balance Sheet...

Submit a detailed Organizational Budget with budgeted and actual financials.

Salaries versus operational expenses...

Salaries power the **people** needed to run the organization while operating expenses represent the **infrastructure**, systems, and tools that move the organization forward.

Boots on the Ground will support both.

Local chapter/branch, apart of a national organization...

Eligibility for this grant will be determined based on the local organization's operating budget.



Fiscal sponsorship

A fiscal sponsor is a nonprofit organization that provides fiduciary oversight, financial management, and other administrative support to help charitable projects operate effectively

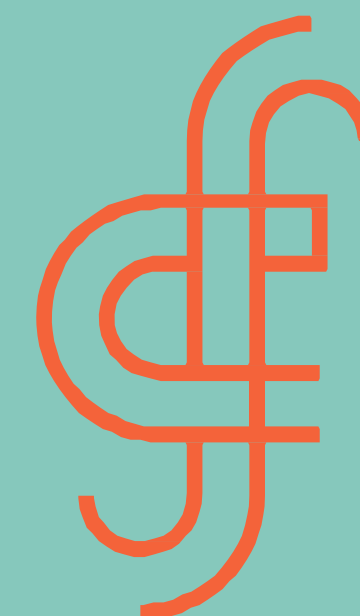
Who may use a fiscal sponsor?

Organizations that do not have a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status may apply to the RFP in partnership with a fiscal sponsor.

Required information when using a fiscal sponsor:

submitted with the application

- Full name, EIN (Employer Identification Number)
- Primary contact information
- Organizational budget, income statement & balance sheet or audited financials for the past two years



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Congratulations! You're a grantee

All Boots on the Ground grant recipients must adhere to the following reporting requirements:

- 6-month check-in with a member of GCF Staff
 - Brief written report in Foundant
 - Provide general information regarding the status of the grant and if assistance is needed.
- One Year Follow Up Report
 - Detailed written report in Foundant
 - Report on performance measures, outcomes, metrics, wins and opportunities
 - Storytelling, photos, media

In addition to what was previously highlighted, it's recommended to consider the following...

- The RFP details are your primary guide
- The only means to express your work is through the application
- Be sure to include all attachments
 - Incomplete applications will not be considered
- Changes can not be made after the application is considered
- **Email is the best form of communication – bootsontheground@gcfdn.org**



Thank you!



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